United Nations S/2001/83

Security Council

Distr.: General
25 January 2001

Original: English

Letter dated 25 January 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On the occasion of the Security Council open debate on the mandate of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), I would like to give a brief overview of the support my country has until now extended to UNTAET and to the transition of East Timor to independence.

In the months following the post-ballot violence, Portugal made substantial contributions to the consolidated humanitarian appeal for East Timor, including contributions to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as a way to help the repatriation and resettlement of refugees and internally displaced people.

Portugal currently has about 800 men in the military component of UNTAET. In an effort to respond to UNTAET's requests for enhancing the force, this number will be increased, as of February 2001, raising our national contingent to a total of around 1,000 men. We also have a police contingent of 165 police officers, including 120 elements of the Rapid Reaction Unit stationed in Dili.

We are participating actively in UNTAET's plans to establish an East Timorese Defense Force, which is considered fundamental to ensure the sovereign right to security of the future independent state. Portugal, which is working alongside other interested countries, has committed 2.3 million United States dollars for this year alone for this purpose. Areas of activity include conducting the selection process of the new recruits, providing training and equipment for the first 600 elements of the new force, and training its naval component, which includes the provision of two patrol launches.

As part of our commitment to establish a sound and sustainable East Timorese administration, we have made a total contribution of $8.4 million for the UNTAET Trust Fund. Other contributions in this area include the provision, at the request of UNTAET, of specialized services and personnel as well as the refurbishment of public buildings, such as the establishment of mail services, the provision of personnel for the justice and border control sectors, and the renovation of the Dili District Court. We have also trained Timorese staff in fire-fighting and support to civilian population in case of disasters. That staff now integrates the Department of Police and Emergency Services of the East Timorese Transitional Administration.

01-22790 (E) 250101

Portugal is also currently finalizing negotiations with UNTAET to provide assistance in the civil aviation sector, by managing the Comoro Airport, in Dili.

Portugal has committed $50 million, to be disbursed over a four-year period (2000-2003), for the World Bank-administered Trust Fund for East Timor. By the end of this year $15 million will have been disbursed, for areas such as infrastructure, health and education. Our efforts in the area of education are very strongly complemented by our bilateral engagement in that sector, which amounts already to $6.8 million. Actions include support to the restructuring of the educational system, training of teachers, support to the production of educational materials and granting of scholarships for Timorese students, both in East Timor and abroad.

Through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Portugal is carrying out projects in the area of sanitation, a much-needed area with a fundamental impact on health conditions. This is being carried out in Baucau, the second largest city in East Timor. We are also working with UNDP and UNTAET in the area of public administration.

Portugal supported the first training course for diplomats, organized and coordinated by UNTAET, which took place in Dili last August. As a follow-up to that support, we are providing further training for groups of new diplomats at our Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Lisbon. This, we believe, to be a very important area, since the new country will need skilled personnel to carry out what its leaders have already established as a priority — the development of foreign relations, especially with the countries in the region.

I will not go through the extensive list of Portugal's bilateral aid to East Timor, since that has been raised in other forums. I will highlight, however, the principles on which it is based: it is complementary to the work of UNTAET, United Nations agencies and the international financial institutions; it seeks the participation of the East Timorese and tries to promote their ownership of the transition process.

Portugal's views on the extension of the mandate of UNTAET and the United Nations presence in East Timor after independence will be expressed tomorrow in the statement of the European Union in the open debate, with which we fully concur.

(*Signed*) António **Monteiro**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative